LITERARY GARDEN

"whether you are reading about gardens, or in a garden while reading, nature and literature are wonderful companions"
The Literary Garden is based on the verity that greenery and literature are wonderful companions. In collaboration with Illinois State University’s Milner Library, the garden focuses on Midwestern authors who have written about agriculture, horticulture, or the environment.

eliza farnham        aldo leopold

laura ingalls wilder

roger welsch        james witcomb riley

lois lenski            edgar lee masters

donald peattie

mark twain        wendell berry

gene stratton-porter

willa cather           carl sandburg
In the place that is my own place, whose earth
I am shaped in and must bear, there is an old tree growing,
a great sycamore that is a wondrous healer of itself.
Fences have been tied to it, nails driven into it,
hacks and whittles cut in it, the lightning has burned it.
There is no year it has flourished in
that has not harmed it. There is a hollow in it
that is its death, though its living brims whitely
at the lip of the darkness and flows outward.
Over all its scars has come the seamless white
of the bark. It bears the gnarls of its history
healed over. It has risen to a strange perfection
in the warp and bending of its long growth.
It has gathered all accidents into its purpose.
It has become the intention and radiance of its dark fate.
It is a fact, sublime, mystical and unassailable.
In all the country there is no other like it.
I recognize in it a principle, an indwelling
the same as itself, and greater, that I would be ruled by.
I see that it stands in its place and feeds upon it,
and is fed upon, and is native, and maker.

*The Sycamore*
by Wendell Berry
To **connect** an author’s work with the part of nature that inspired it

To **focus** on Midwestern authors who have written about agriculture, horticulture, or the environment

To **unite** all the gardens within the Horticulture Center through literature

To **enthusiasm** individuals to nature
The initial phase of the Literary Garden will focus on selected authors’ works that pertain to writings about prairies. In the continued effort to lessen the Center’s impact on the environment the Center has restored two acres of low lying land to native prairie plants on the western part of its site. The prairie is a natural starting point because much of Illinois was originally covered in it. Many individuals and writers were influenced by the vastness and the beauty of the prairie as they came upon and journeyed through the different kinds of prairie forbs and grasses. Some of the first authors that will be chosen for the Literary Garden include Donald Peattie (A Prairie Grove 1938), Eliza Farnham (Life in Prairie Land 1846) and Laura Ingalls Wilder (Little House Books 1932-1943).

No better proof of the reality of this prairie could have been given than the silence which it inspired in myself and my companion. We had burst into exclamations of delight a dozen times before, when the little glades opened around us, but now there was not a word uttered. Both were lost in contemplation of the sublime spectacle which lay before us. ‘We had no inquiries to make. Nature spoke to us in her own unequivocal language.”

*Life in Prairie Land 1846*
by Eliza Farnham
The author’s selected works are tied to their respective plants or gardens using sound post systems. These systems may be solar powered, stand 3½’ in height and allow the garden visitor to read or push a button to listen to the specific passage. Therefore an author like Eliza Farham, who wrote, *Life in Prairie Land*, would have her own post system that would overlook the prairie.

“Nature spoke to us in her own unequivocal language.”